

2010

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Citation Details

Joseph Weiler & Arun Mohan, "The Olympic Games and the Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability: Opportunities and Challenges" (2010) 1:1 Int'l J Sport & Soc 187.

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The Olympic Games and the Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract: Growing public expectations that the Olympic Movement and Olympic Host City Organizing Committees be socially, environmentally and economically responsible has made a commitment to integrate sustainability principles and practices a common theme in the bids of cities competing to host the Games. To understand the growing role of sustainability as an Olympic theme, the authors trace the evolution of the sustainability aspirations of the Olympic Movement by looking at the key Olympic Games and bids in this process. The authors determine that unlocking the potential of the Olympic Games to use sport to attract new audiences to sustainable living cannot be done in the absence of the IOC and Organizing Committees deploying credible efforts to “walk their talk.” These efforts include embracing frameworks that produce, track and report on key Games-related economic, environmental and social outcomes, as well as collaborating with credible non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Furthermore, these outcomes could lead to further positive results by creating the foundation to pursue the unrealized potential of the Olympic Games to transform the way individuals and organizations act on the choices involved in living sustainably.

Keywords: Olympic Movement, Olympic Games, International Olympic Committee (IOC), Evolution, Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability, Economic Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability

Introduction

A MEGA-EVENT IS a “large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) [event], which [has] a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance.”¹ Moreover, an event is deemed to be a mega-event if it has the following two characteristics:

1. First, it allegedly can lead to significant consequences for the host city, region or nation in which it occurs; and,
2. Second, it attracts considerable media coverage.²

The Olympic Games fit this mega-event mould. Thus, while the *Olympic Motto*—*Citius, Altius, Fortius*, which translates from Latin as “Faster, Higher, Braver,” but is globally recognized as “Swifter, Higher, Stronger”—refers to physical pursuits, the Olympic Games are much more than a sporting event. Indeed, Pierre de Coubertin resurrected the Olympic

¹ M. Roche, *Mega-events and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2000) at 1.

² J. Horne, “The Four ‘Knowns’ of Sports Mega-Events” (2007) 26 (1) *Leisure Studies* 82 at 83.

Games to be a unique entity in the world of sport by associating it with a declared philosophy, called *Olympism*, and a collaborative exercise called the *Olympic Movement*. The goal of the Olympic Movement, according to the *Olympic Charter*, is:

...to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity, and fair play.³

Furthermore, the *Olympic Charter* aims to transcend sport by linking the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) activities to the pursuit of peace and protection of human rights:

The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport in accordance with his or her needs.⁴

With respect to Olympism, the *Olympic Charter* states that it encompasses grand values and goals:

Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind.

Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

The goal of Olympism is to place everywhere sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity.⁵

The above descriptions of Olympism and the Olympic Movement are important because they reveal the IOC's pseudo-religious mission, which is to promote a wide range of values and practices related to sport and to greater social and political issues, such as peace, ethics, and human rights. For the past twenty years, the IOC has become committed to nurturing a "new" value by using the Olympic Games as its primary tool: sustainability. Indeed, sustainable development has now become a mandatory subject of thought for Olympic Bid Committees⁶, and Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOG)⁷.

Sustainability became a foundational Olympic value over the course of the last two decades. At the Centennial Olympic Congress in 1994, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) made the environment the third pillar of the Games, alongside sport and culture. Furthermore, in 1999, the IOC decided to create a version of the United Nations' (UN) *Agenda 21 for*

³ International Olympic Committee (IOC), *The Olympic Charter* (Lausanne: IOC, 2007) at rule 1(1), online: IOC < http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf > [*Olympic Charter*].

⁴ *Ibid.* at 11.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ These are the organizations related to potential host cities that bid for the Olympics.

⁷ These are the organizations that have won the privilege of hosting the Games and are now preparing to stage them.

*Sustainable Development*⁸ called the *Olympic Movement's Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development*.⁹ Former IOC President Juan Antonio Samaranch, in his foreword to the Olympic Movement's *Agenda 21*, stated:

Thanks to the universality of sport and to the commitment of sportsmen and women throughout the world, the Olympic Movement has the ability to play an active part in the taking of measures favouring sustainable development.

Ten years later, the Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games (VANOC) aims to create a “stronger Canada whose spirit is raised by its passion for sport, culture and sustainability.”¹⁰ With sustainability at the foundation of the preparations for the 2010 Games,¹¹ the authors want to understand how sustainability became an Olympic theme. As a result, this paper will describe the evolution of the sustainability aspirations of the Olympic Movement by looking at key Olympic Games and bids that were revolutionary (positive or negative) in their impact. Thus, this paper will trace the three phases of sustainability in Olympic Movement, with the economic phase beginning in 1976, with the economic failings of the Montreal Summer Games; then, the environmental phase, which was born out of the environmental disasters found in the 1992 Albertville Winter Games; and the social phase, with social inclusion becoming a central theme through Toronto's bid for the 1996 Summer Games.

Evolution of Economic Sustainability

“Mega” events are typically sold as opportunities for the host city, region or country to reap economic dividends.¹² Cost-benefit analyses of Olympic Games can be complex and the economic sustainability of an Olympics is a frequent source of debate between the event's proponents and opponents, who debate the economic outcomes of an event.¹³ While there were significant differences in management, we need look no further than Canada's Olympic Games, Montreal 1976 and Calgary 1988, to appreciate the variability of outcome.

⁸ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Division of Sustainable Development, *Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development*, online: United Nations <<http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/>> [UN *Agenda 21*].

⁹ International Olympic Committee, *Olympic Movement's Agenda 21 for Sustainable Development*, c. 3 at 23–41, online: IOC <http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_300.pdf> [IOC *Agenda 21*].

¹⁰ Vancouver Organizing Committee for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games (VANOC), “About VANOC”, online: VANOC <<http://www.vancouver2010.com/more-2010-information/about-vanoc/organizing-committee/>>.

¹¹ Due to length constraints, this paper does not discuss the sustainability initiatives found in staging of the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. For a description of VANOC's sustainability efforts, please see R. Pound, K. Bagshaw, L. Coady, J. Weiler, M. Dickson and A. Mohan, “The Olympic Games, the Law and the Triple Bottom Line of Sustainability” (presented at the 2006 Conference of the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice (CIAJ)), in S. Hsu and P.A. Molinari, eds. *Sustainable Development and the Law: People • Environment • Culture* (Montréal: CIAJ, 2008).

¹² See H. Preuss, *Economics of Staging the Olympics: A Comparison of the Games, 1972-2008* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2004).

¹³ E. Kasimati, “Economic Aspects and the Summer Olympics: a Review of Related Research” (2003) 5 *Int. J. of Tourism Res.* 433–444.

Montreal 1976 Summer Games

We start with the 1976 Olympiad because it brought economic sustainability issues into greater focus within the Olympic Movement.

The 1976 Summer Games were awarded to Montreal over competing bids from much bigger cities, such as Moscow and Los Angeles, because the IOC wanted to show that a smaller city could successfully host the Games and also to counter criticisms of the Olympic Games as becoming too commercial and extravagant.¹⁴ Indeed, Mayor Drapeau promised that Montreal would stage a “modest Games.”¹⁵

The Montreal Games were successful from the perspective of the athlete and the spectator. The operating budget for the Games produced an operating surplus of \$223 million resulting from innovative revenue generating initiatives, such as a national Olympic lottery and a commemorative coins program.¹⁶ However, the lasting negative impression of the Montreal Games stems from the \$1.2 billion shortfall created by the huge overrun in construction costs. The Olympic Stadium and Tower have been dubbed the “Big Owe” and have become the symbol of Olympic planning gone very wrong, as their aesthetic beauty could not compensate for their architectural design flaws, which made them ill-fitted for future use.¹⁷ The level of debt went counter to Mayor Drapeau’s boast that “The Olympic Games can no more lose money than a man can have a baby.”¹⁸

The \$1.2 billion venue cost overrun was caused by a number of factors. Most critically, Mayor Drapeau made decisions without consultation and in secret, such as selecting a French architect, with no particular experience in stadium design, to construct the Olympic Stadium, with its retractable roof and huge concrete tower, the adjacent Olympic pool and Vélodrome, and the Athletes’ Village.¹⁹ Repeated labour disputes disrupted construction,²⁰ while provincial regulatory restrictions against using construction workers from outside Quebec created artificial limitations in the operation of the regional labour market, inflating construction costs.²¹

Fortunately for the Olympic Movement, the lessons of the Montreal Games were taken to heart by subsequent Games planners and contributed to the successful staging of the 1984 Summer Games in Los Angeles.

Los Angeles 1984 Summer Games

The experience of Los Angeles (LA) is the next important chapter in our economic sustainability story because the Olympic bid, and subsequent staging of the 1984 Games, saw a seismic shift in the business model for the Games.

¹⁴ N. Auf der Maur, *The Billion-Dollar Game: Jean Drapeau and the 1976 Olympics* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, 1976) at 18; cited in J. Weiler, “Citizen Engagement and the Olympic Games: Will 2010 Be Vancouver’s Time to Shine?”, speech delivered to the Whistler Forum for Dialogue Fourth Annual Summit on Citizen Engagement (9-11 November 2005) at 12.

¹⁵ N. Auf der Maur, *ibid.* at 31.

¹⁶ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 14.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*; Auf der Maur, *supra* note 7 at 132.

¹⁸ CBC News, “Quebec’s Big Owe stadium debt is over” (19 December 2006), online: CBC <<http://www.cbc.ca/canada/montreal/story/2006/12/19/qc-olympicstadium.html>>.

¹⁹ Auf der Maur, *supra* note 14, at 35-37, 96-108; cited in Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 13.

²⁰ Auf der Maur, *ibid.* at 117-119.

²¹ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 13.

Los Angeles had no competition for these Games at the international level as the financial problems suffered at Montreal dissuaded other cities and countries from bidding.²² Consequently the promoters of the LA Games needed only to satisfy local and IOC requirements, and not face competition from other cities, in order to be awarded the Games.²³ The 1984 Bid pledged that the Games would increase tourist revenue and enhance the city's status on the world stage.²⁴ More importantly, it pledged to bring the Games to LA at no cost to taxpayers.²⁵

The 1984 Games, with its net operating and construction surplus of \$225 million, an amount greater than all previous Olympic Games' surpluses combined, proved to be a monumental step towards economic sustainability in the Olympic Movement. This unusual economic success was due to several factors, including: the use of existing sports facilities and accessing sponsorship and television revenue negotiated by the IOC and the Host Committee to pay for the event.²⁶ The surplus also gave birth to a lasting and very useful legacy: approximately 40% of the Games' surplus was used to support local youth sports and Olympic-related research through the Amateur Athletic Foundation of LA (now called the LA84 Foundation).²⁷

As a result of these results, there was a greater interest among cities to bid for the Games, "with the entrepreneurial, yet Spartan, approach of the ... [LAOOC] top of mind."²⁸

Calgary 1988 Winter Games

The organizers of the 1988 Winter Games in Calgary, Alberta were able to build on the positive momentum gained from the LA Games in 1984 to achieve an overall Games surplus (capital and operating budgets) of \$30 million.²⁹ Moreover, comparing this result to that in Montreal reveals how management differences can lead variable economic outcomes.

The financial success of the 1988 Games was due to the combination of national and provincial contributions to venue construction, but also record television revenues exemplified by the \$309 million that ABC paid for US television rights.³⁰ The 1988 Games also left valuable venue facilities as legacies to the host community, including upgrades to the local football stadium (opening and closing ceremonies); new and improved university student residences (athletes' village); a new professional ice rink (hockey and figure skating venue); and the Olympic Oval, still the primary training facility for future Canadian Olympic speed skating champions.

²² Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee (LAOOC), *Official Report of the Games of the XXIII Olympiad, Los Angeles, 1984: Volume I – Organization and Planning* (Los Angeles: LAOOC, 1985), at 9, online: LA84 Foundation <<http://www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1984/1984v1pt1.pdf>>.

²³ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 14.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* at 7-9.

²⁶ LAOOC, *supra* note 22 at 7.

²⁷ The LA84 Foundation, incidentally, hosts a website which is an invaluable tool for those seeking information about the Games and the Olympic Movement. See LA84 Foundation, online: LA84 Foundation <<http://www.la84foundation.org/>>.

²⁸ B. Chalkley and S. Essex, "Urban development through hosting international events: a history of the Olympic Games" (1999) 14 *Planning Perspectives* 369–394.

²⁹ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 18.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

Equally importantly, the Calgary Games demonstrated that the Olympic Games could become a “community-transforming event.”³¹ The Calgary Olympic Winter Games Organizing Committee (OCO) was able to create a “cultural happening” of volunteerism, spectatorship and celebration, whose residual effect still permeates the city.³² For instance, rather than being perceived as an elitist athletic event, the Calgary Games became an “urban celebration,”³³ as the OCO was able to convince Calgarians that they had a stake in the outcome.³⁴ As a result, local citizens were galvanized into the then-largest volunteer force in Olympic history, with a relatively small city at well under 1 million citizens achieving city-wide participation of over 20,000 volunteers.³⁵

Calgary and LA has shown Olympic candidate cities that while there will always be ongoing debate over the level of public investment in the Games and the return that investment generates, the management challenges implicit in delivering a balanced budget for capital and operating expenses are achievable given the right planning framework and business strategies.

Evolution of Environmental Sustainability

While it would be satisfying to state that the IOC has always been in the vanguard of environmental protection and sustainable development, unfortunately, such a statement would not be accurate. The IOC arrived at its present position of concern with environmental issues at about the same time as the rest of the world and, to some degree, as a result of pressures directed at it by third parties after 1992.

Albertville 1992 Winter Games: An Environmental Setback

The year 1992 was selected as our starting point because, in our opinion, the Albertville Winter Games became a turning point in the adoption of environmental considerations by the Olympics.

At a time when the world was becoming increasingly sensitive to environmental issues, the organizers of the Albertville Games were criticized for their treatment of the regional landscape to accommodate the sport requirements for Games venues.³⁶ In particular, the requirements for site design, (e.g. sliding facilities for bobsled and luge and slope side alteration for alpine skiing),³⁷ led to significant alteration of the terrain with what was judged to be insufficient protection of ecosystems, particularly in the sensitive alpine environment.³⁸

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Kevin B. Wamsley & Michael K. Heine, “Tradition, Modernity, and the Construction of Civic Identity: The Calgary Olympics” (1992) 5 *Olympika: Int. J. of Olympic Studies* 81, at 82, online: LA84 Foundation <http://www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/Olympika/Olympika_1996/olympika0501e.pdf>.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ See *ibid.*

³⁵ H. H. Hiller, “The Urban Transformation of a Landmark Event: The 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics” (1990) 26 *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 118 at 120 ff.

³⁶ H. Cantelon & M. Letters, “The Making of the IOC Environmental Policy as the Third Dimension of the Olympic Movement” (2000) 35 *Int. Rev. Soc. of Sport* 294 at 300.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ M. Lellouche, “Albertville and Savoie 1992” in J. Findling & K. Pelle, eds., *Historical Dictionary of the Modern Olympic Movement* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1996) at 318.

For instance, this venue development produced a public outcry over many environmental issues including the increased risk of landslides, the deforestation in alpine regions, and the disruption of animal habitat.³⁹ "As a result, the Albertville Games were the first ever to have their opening ceremony preceded by a local community's protest march on behalf of their natural surroundings and quality of life," with demonstrators marching with coffins to symbolize the environmental damage.⁴⁰ To preclude such a negative environmental outcome in future Games, the IOC resolved to make protection of the environment an integral part of the Olympic Movement.

IOC Reaction to the 1992 Winter Games

In 1992, at the UN Earth Summit Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, held the same year as the Albertville Games, a collection of proposals called *Agenda 21* was forwarded and later adopted by the UN as a model for how the world should ensure sustainable development.⁴¹ In 1994, the IOC took similar steps to address concerns about environmental sustainability at its Centennial Olympic Congress in Paris. The IOC recognized the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development, and declared that the environment would become "the third pillar of Olympism", alongside 3,000 years of focus on sport and culture.⁴²

In 1995, the Sport and Environment Commission was created to advise the IOC Executive Board on policies of the IOC and of the Olympic Movement generally, relating to environmental protection and support for sustainable development.⁴³ This Commission works to promote awareness and educate Olympic family members and sport practitioners about environmental issues and sustainable development⁴⁴ and requires bid cities of future Olympic Games to respect the environment by meeting prescribed standards of sustainable development.

In 1996, the *Olympic Charter* was formally amended to include the IOC's concern for environmental issues and promotion of sustainable development. It is the IOC's role to:

...encourage and support a responsible concern for environmental issues, to promote sustainable development in sport and to require that the Olympic Games are held accordingly.⁴⁵

The IOC took a further step in the development of its sport and environment agenda in 1999 when it, in conjunction with UNEP, passed its own *Agenda 21*. The Olympic Movement's *Agenda 21* addresses three main issues:

³⁹ P.L. DaCosta, *Olympic Studies: Current Intellectual Crossroads* (Rio de Janeiro: University Gama Filho, 2002) at 74, online: LA84 Foundation <<http://www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/Books/OlympicStudies.pdf>>.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ UN Agenda 21, *supra* note 8.

⁴² A. Mohan, "'Swifter, Higher, Stronger... Greener': Investigating the Role of Environmentalism within the Olympic Movement" (UBC Olympic Studies Research Team), a paper prepared for VANOC (2006), at 10.

⁴³ International Olympic Committee, "The Sport and Environment Commission", online: IOC <<http://www.olympic.org/en/content/The-IOC/Commissions/Sport-and-Environment/>>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ International Olympic Committee, "Introduction to the Olympic Charter" in *The Olympic Charter*, *supra* note 3.

1. To improve socio-economic conditions, particularly for disadvantaged and minority groups;⁴⁶
2. To improve conservation and management of resources for sustainable development,⁴⁷ and,
3. To strengthen society by ensuring that all members—particularly women, youth and indigenous peoples—are engaged and respected in the new processes established under sustainable development.⁴⁸

Promoting Sustainable Development in Candidatures for Olympic Games

With the adoption of the Olympic Movement's *Agenda 21*, the IOC had a mandate to work with the constituents of the Olympic Movement to ensure that the Olympic Games are "held in conditions that demonstrate responsible concern for the environment."⁴⁹ Capitalizing on the opportunity to educate nations interested in bidding for Olympic Games, candidate cities must now address green elements in their bids. For instance, "statements provided by Candidate Cities are verified by an Evaluation Commission, which includes an environmental advisor appointed by the International Olympic Committee" and "once elected, the Host City is provided assistance and guidance in its preparations by the IOC Coordination Commission, which also includes an environmental advisor."⁵⁰

Lillehammer 1994 Winter Games: The First Green Games

The experience of Lillehammer, Norway in bidding for and staging the 1994 Winter Olympics is important in understanding the growth of environmental sustainability as an Olympic value. Indeed, the 1994 Games were declared the first *Green Games* because of environmental protection in land use and venue construction and through recycling and composting programs, among other initiatives. Moreover, this was a significant achievement as Lillehammer had been awarded the Games in 1988, almost seven years before the IOC had an environmental policy, and well before the setback of Albertville. In fact, the Lillehammer Games' managers' concern for the environment was home-grown, resulting from local protests and lobbying, and not the result of top-down IOC influence on the organizers.

Environmental and activist groups were heavily engaged in planning and staging the 1994 Winter Games. This was due in part to a protest against the building of the speed skating venue near a bird sanctuary.⁵¹ A respected umbrella group of environmental non-governmental organizations (NGO) called Project Environmentally Friendly Olympics (PEFO) was created and attended weekly meetings with the Lillehammer Olympic Organization Committee

⁴⁶ *IOC Agenda 21*, *supra* note 9 at ch. 3.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* at ch. 3.2.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* at ch. 3.3.

⁴⁹ International Olympic Committee, "Factsheet: Environment and Sustainable Development" (July 2009), at 2, online: IOC <http://www.olympic.org/Documents/Reference_documents/Factsheets/Environment_and_sustainable_development.pdf>.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Lillehammer Olympic Organizing Committee, "Lillehammer '94 and the Environmental Challenge" in *1994 Lillehammer Olympic Winter Games Official Report*, vol. 1 (Oslo: LOOC, 1995), at 124ff, esp. at 127, online: LA84 Foundation <http://www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/1994/E_BOOK1.PDF>.

(LOOC) to ensure consultation.⁵² PEFO and the LOOC set up a four-point plan to ensure environmental protection:

1. “Companies were instructed to use natural materials wherever possible;
2. Emphasis was placed on energy conservation in heating and cooling systems;
3. A recycling program was developed for the entire Games region; and
4. A stipulation was made that the arenas must harmonize with the surrounding landscape.”⁵³

Furthermore, 20 projects were organized, with strict consideration being accorded to post-Games use of the venues.⁵⁴ The LOOC also incorporated an environmental charter into every supplier and partner contract, which targeted environmental assessment compliance, concerns about transportation of athletes, organizers and fans throughout the Games, waste disposal, recycling and water treatment, and whether environmental protection technologies would be developed.⁵⁵

In the end, environmental NGOs and the IOC complemented the LOOC’s drive towards greening the Olympics. Blair Palese of Greenpeace proclaimed that “it’s true they’re really making an effort, and that’s admirable.”⁵⁶ Consequently, then-IOC President Samaranch baptized the Lillehammer Games as the “White-Green Games” at the Closing Ceremony.⁵⁷

Sydney 2000 Summer Games

The 2000 Sydney Games is an important milestone in the Olympic environmental sustainability story because it revealed that breakthroughs could occur through collaborative efforts. Sydney saw a remarkable working relationship between the leading environmental organization in the country (Greenpeace Australia) and the bid and organizing committees. For the first time in Olympic history, and right from the outset of the Olympic process, the Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG) worked with Greenpeace Australia (GA) and the Green Games Watch (GGW) to address many environmental issues. Moreover, this set an entirely new standard of environmental sustainability in the planning and staging of the Games.

GA’s Olympic story begins in 1992, even before the SOCOG existed, when it won a design competition for the Sydney Athletes’ Village. The story is full of intrigue: an open contest to create the best design was announced that year, and it received over 100 submissions.⁵⁸ GA’s Olympic Village design — which was submitted anonymously to ensure an

⁵² H. Ø. Haugen, “The Construction of Beijing as an Olympic City” (Thesis for the Department of Sociology and Human Geography, University of Oslo, 2003), at 53.

⁵³ American University, Trade and Environment Database, “1994 Lillehammer Olympic Case Study”, online: American University <<http://www.american.edu/TED/lille.htm>>.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ International Olympic Committee, “Lillehammer 1994: All Facts”, online: IOC <<http://www.olympic.org/en/content/Olympic-Games/All-Past-Olympic-Games/Winter/Lillehammer-1994/>>.

⁵⁸ Greenpeace Australia Pacific, *How green the Games? Greenpeace’s Environmental Assessment of the Sydney 2000 Olympics* (Sydney: Greenpeace International and Greenpeace Australia Pacific, 2000), at 7, online: Greenpeace Australia Pacific <<http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/australia/resources/reports/general/how-green-the-games-greenpea.pdf>>.

unbiased evaluation of its proposal — "was car-less, powered by the sun, used land carefully, included only non-toxic and eco-friendly materials, conserved and reused resources, and acted as a platform for cutting-edge green technologies."⁵⁹ Moreover, this achievement led to its collaboration with the Sydney Olympics 2000 Bid Corporation (SOBL) to create an overall environmental strategy.

SOCOG's commitment towards environmentalism was expressed in the *Environmental Guidelines for the Summer Olympic Games*, proposed by the SOBL in September 1993, and prepared by GA.⁶⁰ The remarkable breakthrough here was that GA played a vital role in acting as an environmental consultant during the Bid process; a watchdog during the staging of the Games; and, later, an independent assessment authority after the Games. The *Guidelines*, which outlined the environmental standards that were to be achieved during the Games, specifically focussed on sustainable development, and recognized "the major environmental issues of global warming, loss of biodiversity, ozone depletion and air and water pollution."⁶¹ Furthermore, upon the completion of the Sydney Games, Greenpeace Australia published a much anticipated and well-publicized report (card) on the Games' environmental successes and failures.⁶²

SOCOG, as a result of their determination to fulfill these early commitments, had many sustainability success stories in the staging of their Games, including: the clean-up of the formerly contaminated Homebush Bay area of Sydney into the Olympic heartland; new sporting, business, recreation and conservation facilities for Games and post-Games use; effective promotion of public transport by including the use of transit in the price of event tickets; and innovative energy conservation within the Olympic Stadium.⁶³

The lesson from the 2000 Sydney Games is that collaboration between Organizing Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOG) and NGOs can lead to openness in the preparation and staging process. That is, the relationship can enable lessons to be learned and used, not only in the host city and country, but also in future Olympiads.

F. Beijing 2008 Summer Games

The Beijing Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games (BOCOG) aim was deliver a "Green Olympics" to the world.⁶⁴ Beijing's 2001 *Bid Candidacy Report* enumerated 20 Bid Commitments that would achieve this, including: the "implementation of cutting-edge environmental technologies in the design of Olympic venues; use of natural resource-efficient,

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Greenpeace Australia Pacific, *Environmental Guidelines for the Summer Olympic Games* (Sydney: SOBL, 1993) online: Greenpeace Australia Pacific <<http://www.greenpeace.org/australia/resources/reports/general/1993-environmental-guidelines>> [*Greenpeace Australia Guidelines*].

⁶¹ Australian Department of Environment and Heritage, "Why the Green Games?", online: Government of Australia <<http://web.archive.org/web/20060916125046/http://www.deh.gov.au/events/greengames/whygreen.html>>.

⁶² Greenpeace Australia Guidelines, *supra* note 59 at 3, 5.

⁶³ Sydney Organizing Committee for the Olympic Games, "Special Relationships: The Environment" in *Official Report of the XXVII Olympiad: Volume 1* (Sydney: SOCOG, 2001), at 353, online: LA84 Foundation <<http://www.la84foundation.org/6oic/OfficialReports/2000/2000v1.pdf>>

⁶⁴ Beijing 2008 Olympic Games Bidding Committee (BOBICO), *2008 Candidacy Bid Report* (Beijing: BONICO, 2001) at "Theme Four: Environmental Protection and Meteorology", at 49, online BOCOG <<http://images.beijing2008.cn/upload/lib/bidreport/zt4.pdf>>.

non-polluting and recyclable materials for facilities and equipment; .. and [the] promotion of public transportation and clean fuel vehicles in the Olympic transport system.”⁶⁵

There were achievements and challenges. According to a pre-Games assessment by Greenpeace China (GC), BOGOG’s positive results include “the introduction of state-of-the-art energy saving technology in Olympic venues — for example the Olympic Village will showcase various technologies such as solar hot water, geothermal, and solar photovoltaic (PV) systems...and 20% of the Olympic venue electricity used during the Games will be purchased from clean wind sources supplied by the Guanting wind power station, Beijing’s first wind power generation station”⁶⁶ However, GC was disappointed that Beijing did not “make environmentally-friendly policies for the Games in the areas of procurement and construction binding...[and] make environmental data and certification of Olympic venues fully transparent.”⁶⁷

Why were these challenges present? A lesson learned early in our discussion is that a key driver of environmental sustainability at earlier Olympiads (i.e., Lillehammer and Sydney) is the cultivation of a relationship between OCOGs and NGOs early on in the candidate city’s bid process. However, UNEP found that “the greatest problem in Beijing’s attempt at hosting a Green Games is the limited engagement and minimal third party assessments of its environmental efforts.”⁶⁸ In fact, “serious engagement between NGOs and BOCOG only began in 2006, after UNEP organized to bring BOCOG and NGOs together at a roundtable in Lausanne, Switzerland,”⁶⁹ and only “when the construction of most Games facilities was nearing completion and many policies were already in place.”⁷⁰

Yet, GC’s overall assessment was that while the 2008 Olympics did not meet the high standards found in the Sydney 2000 Games, “the environmental efforts of BOCOG and the Beijing municipal government have created a positive legacy for the city of Beijing.”⁷¹

Evolution of Social Sustainability

Social sustainability of the Olympic Games revolves around the belief that a mega event, rather than benefiting a small and perhaps elite segment of the population, can benefit and be inclusive of different groups and communities with the end result being that the entire host community and country benefits from the event. Social sustainability is a relatively recent addition to the objectives of OCOGs and is therefore a less well-developed concept than economic or environmental sustainability. According to VANOC, social sustainability within the Vancouver 2010 Games will be achieved by “[broadening] the notion of accessible Games by reaching out to inner-city residents and businesses, Aboriginal peoples and others

⁶⁵ UNEP, *Independent Environmental Assessment: Beijing 2008 Olympic Games* (Geneva: UNEP, 2009), at 14-15, online: UNEP online: < http://www.unep.org/publications/UNEP-eBooks/BeijingReport_ebook.pdf >.

⁶⁶ Greenpeace China, *China after the Olympics: Lessons from Beijing* (Hong Kong: Greenpeace China, 2008), at 4, online: Greenpeace China < <http://www.greenpeace.org/raw/content/china/en/press/reports/green.pdf> >.

⁶⁷ Greenpeace China, “China after the Olympics: Lessons from Beijing” (website), online: Greenpeace China < <http://www.greenpeace.org/china/en/news/green> >.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* at 13.

⁶⁹ UNEP, *Beijing 2008: An Environmental Review* (Geneva: UNEP, 2007), at 122, online: UNEP < <http://www.unep.org/downloads/BeijingReport.pdf> >.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.* at 123.

⁷¹ Greenpeace China, *supra* note 66 at 4.

who don't typically participate in the opportunities created by the Games." ⁷² This sentiment came from lessons learned in Toronto's failed bid for the 1996 Summer Games.

Toronto's Bid for the 1996 Summer Games

The story of Toronto's failed candidacy for the 1996 Games is important because while Atlanta was eventually awarded the 1996 Games, Toronto's Bid constituted a big step forward in the evolution of the Olympic planning process because it is the first example of a comprehensive pre-Bid process of community consultation. Indeed, it certainly influenced the Vancouver 2010 Bid Corporation, which embraced many of the key substantive and procedural ideas of the Toronto process including the effort to enhance the goals of social inclusion in line with the humanitarian goals that the Olympic Movement pursues. ⁷³

In April 1985, Paul Henderson, a former Olympic athlete, was present at a speech by Peter Ueberroth, the president of the LAOC, who spoke of the positive impacts of hosting the 1984 Games on LA. ⁷⁴ Henderson became enamoured with the thought of Toronto achieving these same benefits and helped form the Toronto Ontario Olympic Council (TOOC) to pursue the 1996 Games. In August 1986, TOOC released a study, ⁷⁵ which listed potential positive consequences of hosting the 1996 Summer Games, including "international profile the city would gain...[and] the opportunity to use the games to spur development in former industrial and waterfront areas of the city."⁷⁶ The TOOC predicted that these would be the games of "excellence"—the unrelenting pursuit of the competitive best", and would help Toronto to become recognized as a "world class city."⁷⁷

The *Feasibility Study* dealt with many issues, including housing. Specifically, more than 3,200 new units were to be built and these units would "be 100% affordable" and 60% social housing, using the provincial definition of affordable housing. ⁷⁸ The TOOC also investigated forced evictions and found that "residential displacement [was] not a likelihood in Toronto" in part because of greater attention brought to the issue after 1986 World Exposition (Expo '86) in Vancouver, BC, which was the site of an eviction crisis. ⁷⁹

However, community-based opposition to the Bid soon mobilized in the form of the Bread Not Circuses Coalition (BNCC), an organization formed in February 1989 and encompassing inner-city social housing activists, church groups and trade unions. ⁸⁰ It sought to move the focus of civic politics from what it saw as "mega project mania" in the city (such as SkyDome

⁷² VANOC, "12 Ways VANOC Built Sustainability into the Games", online: VANOC < <http://www.vancouver2010.com/more-2010-information/sustainability/discover-sustainability/> >.

⁷³ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 10.

⁷⁴ K. Olds, "CANADA: Hallmark Events, Evictions, and Housing Rights" in A. Azuela, E. Duhau, & E. Ortiz, eds., *Evictions and the Right to Housing: Experience from Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, South Africa, and South Korea* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1998) 1, at 32ff, online: IDRC <http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-32007-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html>.

⁷⁵ Toronto/Ontario Olympic Council, *Toronto as Host to the 100th Anniversary Olympics: a Feasibility Study*. Prepared for TOOC by CMP/Barnard Management Consultants (Toronto: T.O.O.C., 1986), cited in Olds, *ibid* [*Feasibility Study*].

⁷⁶ Olds, *supra* note 74 at 33.

⁷⁷ Bruce Kidd, "The Toronto Olympic Commitment: Towards A Social Contract for the Olympic Games" (1992) 1 *Olympika: Int. J. of Olympic Studies* 154–167, online: LA84 Foundation <http://www.la84foundation.org/SportsLibrary/Olympika/Olympika_1992/olympika0101h.pdf> at 156.

⁷⁸ Olds, *supra* note 74 at 34.

⁷⁹ *Feasibility Study*, *supra* note 74; Cantelon & Letters, *supra* note at 36 at V–11, cited in Olds, *ibid*. at 35.

⁸⁰ At the time of writing, the organization "Bread Not Circuses" did not have a website.

stadium) towards addressing the needs of the poor and homeless who were not enjoying the fruits of the late 1980s Toronto economic boom.⁸¹ The BNCC used a number of strategies to spotlight social issues, including “in-depth research and documentation of various aspects of the Bid process and the impacts of hallmark events in other cities; lobbying efforts directed at politicians, government officials, TOOC officials, the media, and IOC members; coalition-building with community groups in other bidding cities (such as Melbourne, Australia) and within Toronto; and public protests.”⁸²

In response to the campaign mounted by the BNCC, Toronto City Council established the Olympic Task Force of civic department heads “to address a wide range of issues, including finance, environmental impacts, public-involvement processes, and housing impacts.”⁸³ Eventually, Toronto City Council received the Olympic Task Force report and enunciated a statement of principles, called the “Toronto Olympic Commitment”, to govern the Bid. Specifically, the “Commitment” fell under 5 categories: “social equity, environment, financial guarantees, a healthy Olympics, and jobs.”⁸⁴ The issue of housing came under the social equity category, with a promise to not displace residents due to Games visitors.⁸⁵ Moreover, the “Commitment” required public scrutiny of all the elements of the Bid through social and environmental impact assessments and a series of public meetings.⁸⁶

The end result was that in order to gain the endorsement of City Council, the Bid needed to address affordable and social housing stock from Olympic housing as a Games legacy; affordable recreation facilities; and, subsidized Olympic tickets for low-income Torontonians. These elements were eventually incorporated into the Bid which then was endorsed by Toronto City Council on April 12, 1990 by a vote of 12 to 4 and subsequently submitted to the IOC.

The full social impact assessment and wide ranging consultation found in the Toronto Bid certainly confirmed and, to some extent, broadened the community’s support for the city hosting the Games. Furthermore, visiting IOC delegates, in the lead up to the vote, expressed their admiration for the extensive public review process and suggested that it should serve as a model for other candidate host cities.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, in the end, Atlanta was awarded the 1996 Games.

The Atlanta 1996 Centennial Games

Atlanta, Georgia, won the bid to host the 1996 Games over Toronto. In stark contrast to the efforts of the Toronto 1996 Bid, the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) made no real effort to broaden the constituency of the Olympic project to include, in any significant way, local civic government and the less advantaged people of Atlanta in a planning and operational role, or to target this constituency as beneficiaries of the legacies of the Games.⁸⁸

⁸¹ Olds, *supra* note 74 at 36.

⁸² *Ibid.* at 40.

⁸³ *Ibid.* at 36.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* at 37.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ Kidd, *supra* note 77 at 163.

⁸⁸ Weiler, *supra* note 14 at 29.

The ACOG had been formed as a private non-profit organization composed of many of Atlanta's civic and business leaders, with responsibility for development of the sport facilities and operation of the Games.⁸⁹ Meanwhile, the Corporation for Olympic Development in Atlanta (CODA) was created by the City of Atlanta with ambitious plans to use the Games as a mechanism to achieve substantial urban renewal, particularly in the inner city of Atlanta where much of the Olympic construction was to take place. CODA received federal money to support transportation, public housing and other infrastructure projects in a more accelerated manner than would otherwise have been the case if the Olympic Games had not been awarded to the city. Unfortunately for CODA, it had no access to the funds that had been made available to construct the Olympic venues because none of these funds came from local government. In this context, CODA had little input on how these funds would be spent, or whether any of these funds could be channelled into neighbourhood redevelopment projects and what could be done about the potential negative impacts of these facilities, such as the displacement of low-income housing.⁹⁰

Our definition of social sustainability not only refers to including various groups in the Olympic decision-making process, but also spreading economic benefits across all groups, rather than narrowly to elites. Using this understanding of the concept, the 1996 Games were not a success in the social sustainability arena. There was no coordinated strategy between the city of Atlanta, CODA and ACOG to spur the revival of the inner-city through a concerted inter-agency effort to attract major investment to jump start the redevelopment of the inner-city and create lasting benefits for its disadvantaged population.⁹¹ As a result, the Atlanta Games made only modest changes to the city's infrastructure and no real progress was made in the effort to ease poverty or to build capacity in inner-city populations.⁹²

Atlanta's failure to apply social inclusion commitments like those of Toronto's failed bid for the 1996 Games led to its inability to seize the opportunity presented by the Centennial Games to ensure that disadvantaged communities had the opportunity to share in the economic benefits of the Games. This result, coupled with criticisms of the Games experience as being too commercial, contributed to lack of commendation of these Games by the IOC as being the latest example of the "Best Games Ever".⁹³

Moreover, the baton to implement the social aspirations of the Olympic Movement's *Agenda 21* doctrine⁹⁴ would be passed to subsequent host cities, including Vancouver in 2010.

Conclusions

This paper has explored past Olympic Games and bids to uncover lessons for staging more sustainable Games. We have seen that the Olympic Movement aims to bring about important social, economic and environmental outcomes. In particular, the Olympic experience in Los Angeles (1984), Calgary (1988), and Sydney (2000) reveals that the Games can be an opportunity to provide social, economic and environmental legacies. Often, it is the context of the

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* at 30.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ IOC *Agenda 21*, *supra* note 9.

overall planning required for consideration of a project of the magnitude of the Games that planners have the opportunity to “think big” about the future and to conceive projects that may have been before their eyes for years, but never got beyond the subliminal.

Yet, unlocking the potential of the Games to use sport to attract new audiences to sustainable living cannot be done in the absence of the IOC and Organizing Committees deploying credible efforts to “walk their talk”. This potential is being realized as the IOC and OCOGs embrace management frameworks that produce, track and report on key Games-related social, economic and environmental outcomes. Moreover, there are also accountability frameworks that will ensure that promises made in the Bid process are kept. For instance, the inclusion of knowledgeable NGOs in the organization process ensures that these groups act as “watchdogs” for their constituents. Thus, the process of development of sustainability as an Olympic value has created the foundation for the pursuit of the once-unrealized potential of the Games to actually change the way individuals and organizations act on the choices involved in living more sustainably.⁹⁵

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Professor Joseph Weiler joined the UBC Faculty of Law in 1974. Professor Weiler has acted as a mediator and arbitrator in over 400 disputes and was elected to the National Academy of Arbitrators in 1984. He served as Special Advisor to the Vancouver Canucks Hockey Club from 1992-95. From 1995-2000 he served on the Board of Directors of BC Film and from 1997-2003 he was on the Telus New Media and Broadcast Fund Advisory Board. He has also acted on behalf of 2010 Games Sponsor Teck Resources to help activate its spon-

⁹⁵ The authors would like to thank the following individuals for their insight and support in assembling the content of this paper: Richard Pound, Member of the International Olympic Committee and Chairman of the World Anti-Doping Agency; Paolo Revellino and Ugo Pretato of the Torino Organizing Committee; Diane (Conrad) Gleason of the Salt Lake Organizing Committee; David Stubbs of the London Organizing Committee; Michele LeMaitre and the Olympic Games Global Impact Working Group of the IOC; Myrna Khan and Adine Mees of Canadian Business for Social Responsibility; Coro Strandberg, Wayne Soper and Derek Thompson, trusted advisors to VANOC’s sustainability team. From the Vancouver Organizing Committee: Linda Coady (Vice President, Sustainability) and Margaret Dickson (Manager, Sustainability Initiatives), for sharing their knowledge of both VANOC’s sustainability initiatives, as well as “the way forward” towards the goal of sustainable development; Ken Bagshaw (Chief Legal Officer) for sharing his knowledge of the intersection between the law, the Canadian and provincial regulatory regime, and the Olympic Games; Dorothy Byrne for generously sharing her extensive knowledge of negotiations and activities during the bid phase as well as a prized box set of Bid Books, and for granting permission to paraphrase much of her September 2004 presentation on VANOC’s legal framework to Members of the 20 Club in this paper; Donna Wilson and the Sustainability and Aboriginal Participation Team; Tina Symko, Neil Turner and George McKay for patiently explaining the intricacies of environmental assessment processes and outlining the details of VANOC’s environmental best practices; Stephanie Herdman and Ken Baker for many efforts made to clarify understanding of Bid-phase events; and, the members of the 2006 edition of the University of British Columbia (UBC) Olympic Studies Research Team, who, under the supervision of Professor Joseph Weiler (UBC Law) and Arun Mohan (LLB, UBC Law), produced a series of reports in the Summer of 2006 on the topic of “Sustainability and the Olympic Movement.” The students were: Kristen Bargmeyer, Faculty of Law, University of Minnesota; Param Chauhan, Faculty of Human Kinetics, UBC; Jeremy Fung, Faculty of Law, UBC; Lyndsay Hayhurst, Faculty of Human Kinetics, UBC; Justin Kates, Faculty of Law, University of Western Ontario; Monica Klimo, Faculty of Law, University of Windsor, Tim Louman-Gardiner, Faculty of Law, UBC; and, Patrick Weiler, Faculty of Arts, McGill University.

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